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THE RECORD

OF

HAMPTON'S RETURNED INDIAN PUPILS

BY

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HAMPTON'S RETURNED INDIAN PUPILS.

The question is no longer, Can the Indian be taught civilized ways? That has been demonstrated by the schools, East and West. All persons are now asking, with greater or less interest, What becomes of the returned students? Do they retain their civilization or do they entirely fall away? In other words, does the God who teaches and enables the white man to stand upright withhold His grace from the Indian earnestly pleading for the same opportunities and power?

"By their fruits ye shall know them," is the text for the red as well as the white man.

To the facts, therefore, let us go. A recent visit to the Indian country assured me that these returned students are doing wonderfully well. Out of all sent back, only one-tenth have in any way adopted Indian habits. Not one, so far as I could learn, had done anything criminal. Where are the classes sent out year after year from our Eastern colleges? How many earn their living by honest toil? How many are leading holy, upright lives? Let us not, then, put upon these poor Indian children burdens which we ourselves do not bear. If some have gone into the camp, this is not permanent. No good work can be lost. What they seem to lose others gain. If they drop back a little, they bring their friends up a little. One of the Hampton boys went to the camp and found a wife. At first our hearts were pained to learn that he was living as did the Indian. What, however, are the facts? The boy brought the girl to the Christian church to be married, and man and wife are now at Hampton Institute. Thus what the boy lost by going into the camp resulted in the salvation of the girl. If

once you get a hold upon these children you can influence them for better things. A boy who was at Hampton for a short time and who was sent home because physically unsound lived as his wild friends lived. When asked to discard the blanket and cut his hair, he promised, at the risk of losing his so-called home, to do both. This promise I believe he has kept.

At Crow Creek and Lower Brulé Agencies the people had decided to send no more children East. This was caused by the evil reports of some disappointed and sick students, who had been brought sick and had to be returned sick. They naturally felt badly at accomplishing little here, and threw the blame upon the school. How human all this! The poor parents believed it, and said they could not send their children away. Providentially, however, Thomas T., a nice-looking Hampton boy, was in the returned party. He was brought in the council of the chiefs and head men and acted as interpreter for the Agent and myself, and then, by the invitation of the Agent, spoke to the chiefs, telling what he knew about school life. Some believed him and some believed him not. What a trial to this lad of nineteen years to do what is contrary to Indian custom—speak in Council; the young men are expected to keep quiet. Yet he stood up in the presence of his people, and told them truths which he knew they would not believe. It was evident all felt proud of him, even though they received not his words. That boy now teaches half of the day in the Government school and acts as interpreter the other half.

William S., who was at Hampton a short time only, is at Crow Creek. He has married, has been confirmed in the Church, is working steadily in the carpenter-shop, and is well spoken of by all. He wanted to return, bringing his wife to Hampton; but his health not being sufficiently good, we had to say no.

To my great surprise, I found a boy at Crow Creek, from whom we expected nothing special, working faithfully in one of the shops. The trade learned at Hampton was helpful. How neat and nice one of the educated girls looked by the side of her friends. She was the pride and joy of her mother's heart.

At Lower Brulé Agency we found fourteen of the Hampton students. Every one wore citizen's dress. They were coming from a service in the church as we reached the Agency, and presented a fine appearance. They had been working in the shops, in the school, assisting the missionary, and cultivating the soil. Frank Y., who was a blacksmith, had also raised a crop of wheat. Samuel M. had taught school and acted as Catechist in his father's camp—doing a good work. He said, however, he felt the need of more training, that after a year's teaching the pupils would know as much as he knew. (His sister and himself are now at Hampton.) George W., who was baptized the night before leaving Hampton and confirmed by Bishop Hare in Dakota, though exceedingly reserved, voluntarily spoke to a group of his people in behalf of Christian education. We called, not a council of the chiefs at their place, but of the returned students, and asked their help in gathering others. To them is due in large part our success. In spite of the unanimous decision of the chiefs that none should leave, we had to refuse to take some because physically weak and because the number was made up, and brought eleven fine specimens from those two Agencies. I was most hospitably entertained at Lower Brulé by a native missionary, Rev. L. C. Walker.

At Cheyenne River Agency we found that one of the Hampton boys was Agency interpreter, another head man at the farm, and another acting as Government scout. Felix B., the interpreter, went with us over the country in search of children, and rendered valuable service. From this Agency we brought eight. Do not understand me to say that all these children are saints. This, however, I do say; I believe some are earnest Christians struggling for the right and stemming the current. All are standing up in the face of great opposition. Many of the chiefs do not want the children educated, fearing they may lose their power over them. The grandmothers say, as do other old fogies, "Why anything new? the old was good enough for us! These children want to be white people and forget their mothers and grandmothers." At some Agencies, the prejudice of em-

ployees is very great. It is to their interest to keep these students down ; they fear if these work in the shops they may lose their place and pay. Sufficient opportunities and facilities are not given them to work. They are expected to "make brick without straw." Truly the Indian has found no royal road to learning civilization. Do not these fruits, however, betoken *some good* in the tree? Again, people often ask, Are the Indians anxious to have their children educated and do they come of their own accord? When they have had a taste of knowledge or civilization, they are hungry for more ; when ignorant, like a starving man, they know not how hungry they are. In the one case, they see the imperative necessity of education ; in the other, they see it not. It is heartrending to see their brains, like their land, lying idle.

We visited the camp of Chief Hump, about eighty miles from Cheyenne River Agency. My wife, Miss Folsom, and Mrs. Swan, wife of the Agent, were the first white ladies who had been there. These Indians had been engaged in the Sitting Bull hostilities. I made known to the chief the object of our mission, and asked him to send six or eight from his band. He asked me how much pay I got for each child I took away. The poor man, in his blindness, could not think of anything higher than the "loaves and fishes." He said he could not send any children without holding a council of his people. He, with Burke, thought that a "man to lead must follow his people." The people were off hunting and cutting wood, and could not be called together. So, in this case, he could neither lead nor follow.

We learned of a family where there were four children—two girls and two boys—and were urged to get the girls in school. We went to the poor home—if home it could be called—and asked the man to send his daughter to school. He kept quiet for awhile, and then said : "I have not spoken because I am *not* going to send my children." I tried to reason with him. He said : "It is no use to argue with me ; I cannot let my children go." The grandmother then appeared at the door of

her tipi and began to howl. She declared they must not go, saying, "The Government has taken away our tobacco, has cut down our rations, and now wants to take away our children." I told them I would carry the children to the Agency to be examined by the physician. If well, I wanted them to go to school; if not, I would not take them. This was enough for the mother, who had been sitting still. She thought the time had come for her to part with her children, and she could stand it no longer. She looked at me, it seemed for a moment or more—that look I cannot forget—and screaming, rushed to the door of her miserable house, broke it open, took down a long knife, and gashed herself until the blood flowed. The knife not being sufficiently sharp, she got a stone and whetted it, weeping all the time. This meant, I believe, that she had yielded the point and was terribly grieved at the idea of giving up her children, she knew not for what. The worst was over, and if the children could have been placed in a school near home it might have done well, but it would not do to take them under such circumstances any great distance. These poor creatures know not what they are doing in refusing to take the help offered them.

On the other hand, those who know better are exceedingly eager for education. A mother who heard of our being on the reserve, brought her boy sixty or seventy miles to ask us to take him. He is at Hampton to-day. After leaving the Agency for the steamboat landing, some three miles off, a boy appeared, having ridden fifteen or eighteen miles, and earnestly asked to go to school. We sent him to the Agency physician to be examined. He went at full speed and returned, bringing a note from the doctor, stating he had enlargement of the thyroid glands and had better not go. When told the contents of the note he was greatly disappointed, and volunteered to run the risk, saying he would not have come if he had not wanted to go. We asked if he wished to go in the face of what the doctor had said? He answered, "Yes, I want to go." We then said, "Suppose you get sick and die there?" Nothing seemed to

move him—he still insisted that he must go, and agreed, if too sick to stay, to pay his way back home by selling some cattle he had, thus relieving the Government of all responsibility in the matter. Of course, we brought that boy, and he has had no trouble since coming. Such earnestness must tell.

At Lower Brulé Agency, one of the Hampton students told me of a girl who wished to go. He escorted the missionary and myself to her home. As we neared the log house we saw a long piece of red calico flying like a flag over the house. "What does that mean?" we asked. "It is a sacrifice to God for the sick man within," was the reply. We entered the house and found the father very feeble, and a bright-looking girl making a dress equally bright to wear to Hampton. I confess my heart failed me when I saw the old man's condition. I did not know that the daughter ought to leave him. The missionary made known the object of our visit. A chief who had come in to see his sick relative undertook to reply, saying the sick man could not talk much, and he would talk for him. He urged some objections to sending children away. After he had finished—there only one must talk at a time—I tried to answer his objections, first speaking to the sick man words of comfort and of eternal life. The poor man then asked his wife a question, who replied, saying, "The girl says she wants to go, because the men are courting her; she does not wish to be married now, and when married she wants to be married in the Christian way." The father, almost too weak to talk, then made his speech. He said in substance: "I am sick and cannot live long. I want my children to go to school, that they may be able to take care of themselves after I am gone." He sent for another daughter, and asked me to take both. Did not that man have a brave heart? The chief, to my utter amazement, then apologized, stating he thought his kinsmen would not want his children to go, therefore he said what he did.

As the eyes of these people open they see the pressing need of education; they realize that they must be able to stand by the side of their white brothers.

While driving over I thought I saw the Indian question illustrated. In a large herd of cattle owned by a Frenchman who had married an Indian woman I saw four buffaloes. Now no wild buffaloes can be found in that part of Dakota. Were one to appear he would be hunted down and killed. How do these remain in safety? They were caught when young, were trained to live with the civilized cattle, and now they adjust themselves to their surroundings.

Even so the white people now live in and around that country. The Indian cannot be hunted any more; there is too much Christianity in this land for that. But unless he is taken young and taught to adjust himself to his surroundings he will always be oppressed, and there will always be trouble. He must be able to work and live as does the civilized white man; this training must be done by the schools East and West, and there is no time to be lost in doing it.

J. J. GRAVATT.

HAMPTON, VA., December 11th, 1884.

